Editorial

Vancouver via Hanau and Cape Town – a continuing journey!

The title to this editorial sounds like a journey that I have undertaken, apparently not the most direct way – Canada from London via Germany and South Africa. However, I am referring to a different type of journey – one targeted to growing industrial demand for gold through developing new applications from the exciting science emerging from the research laboratories around the world. In this context, it is worth remarking that the industrial demand for gold has remained relatively static for over a decade and that there has been no significant new application (in terms of gold demand) for several decades, in stark contrast to the other precious metals.

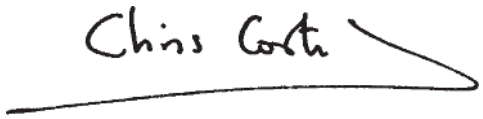
The **Hanau** international conference in 1996 awakened interest in gold, fulfilling a long dormant need for a focus on gold science and technology and a forum for bringing scientists and industrialists together to discuss progress and application potential. The book based on the conference presentations, 'Gold – Progress in Chemistry, Biochemistry and Technology', stands as a most useful reference of the state of the art at that time. As Prof. Hubert Schmidbaur then remarked, the Hanau conference was hopefully the first of a continuing series of gold conferences, but who would take these forward was far from clear.

At Hanau, surprisingly, there was little mention of the advances in gold catalysis that were emerging and which had started to excite the catalysis community. That omission was rectified 5 years later in 2001 when AngloGold and World Gold Council, along with Mintek, sponsored the **Cape Town** international conference, 'Catalytic Gold'. This conference was unique in bringing the world's leading gold catalysis researchers together for the first time and proved to be very stimulating. We became conscious of the large applications potential of gold catalysts too.

Cape Town triggered the publication of our newsletter, *CatGold News*, and the production of the Gold Reference Catalysts. It also led directly to the **Vancouver** international conference, 'GOLD 2003', held recently at the end of September and which covered all areas of gold science, technology and applications (a report on this conference appears in this issue). Whilst progress in gold catalysis was a dominant topic, advances in chemistry, materials and nanotechnology were also strong. This undoubtedly successful conference demonstrated that gold nanotechnology is now a major new, innovative and exciting field with considerable applications potential in many areas. It also demonstrated that many of the new applications will be based on chemical science rather than the materials science of current applications.

As you may surmise, my journey has not been completed; the next stage will be the fourth gold conference, to be held somewhere in **Europe** in 2006 (details will be announced in *Gold Bulletin* in 2004). Hopefully, we shall be discussing actual new commercial applications that have emerged, based on the science we have discussed in Hanau, Cape Town and Vancouver. Hopefully too, we shall see the flat demand curve for gold beginning to turn upwards!

That gold really is a unique metal was clearly evident in Vancouver. Despite its long history, it is also a metal of the 21st century. Of that I have no doubt!



Christopher W. Corti
Editor

N.B. The Keynote lectures from the GOLD2003 conference in Vancouver will be published in a special, considerably enlarged issue of *Gold Bulletin,* volume 37(1), in April 2004. The conference presentations and posters will be available on the conference website, www.gold2003.org shortly.